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Constipation

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Constipation

The American Malady

We pride ourselves on scientific achievements and the newer knowledge of agriculture, chemistry, medicine, nutrition, research, and manufacturing processes. Yet, in late centuries, with all our knowledge, the one thing that has not been altered much in thousands of years is the physiology of the human digestive tract. Mammals have always catered to the digestive system and must continue to do so regardless of any advance made in the study of biochemorphology. It is the abuse of this lifeline to health that authorities believe has led to the great American complaint—constipation.

Now a Common Syndrome

Constipation or restiveness ("to stay back") is further described as a condition in which the bowels are evacuated at long intervals, incompletely, or with difficulty. Usually, the cause is related to various nutritional defects, such as a lack of fats, minerals, proteins, or vitamins needed by the liver and other organs; for instance, thyroid inactivity due to iodine or vitamin deficiency. Presently the common lack of bulk-forming factors, such as cellulose, to stimulate the natural rhythmic peristaltic action that actually, in a mechanical way, moves the bowel contents toward evacuation is also an important factor. Additionally, lack of exercise and insufficient mastication because of poor teeth may contribute to constipation in the aged.

Everyone knows that the early American diet consisted of food made from whole grain seeds, meat (including fatty meat), eggs, and dairy products. Early statistics do not reveal that atherosclerosis, coronary thrombosis and/or other heart and vascular conditions, or cancer, were major disease entities. Apparently at that time constipation was not a problem.

Sugar a Contributor

Modern pappy bulkless foods contain mostly sugar or starch, which is also digested as glucose and adds to the excess dietary sugar problem. In addition to the food sources of sugar, late statistics issued by candy manufacturers reveal that the per capita consumption of candy has now reached twenty pounds per year. Per capita normally includes men, women, and children. Candy is now a three billion dollar per year industry. The latest increase is probably due to use in dry breakfast cereals, the "Candy Man" song, and slanted TV programs appealing to the sweet tooth of children, especially on Saturday mornings.

Dawn Ann Kurth, age eleven, from Melbourne, Florida, testified at a Senate hearing on May 31, 1972, and was quoted as saying: "Almost all the ads I have seen during children's programs are for candy or sugar-coated cereal with candy in it." Eventually a sweet tooth becomes a toothache, and adulterating high-priced cereals with cheap sugar or candy is another consumer headache. To quote Ralph Nader:

> "Food, when it comes in breakfast cereal form, is part entertainment, part diversion, part fraud, part air and part food. You go through a breakfast cereal plant and you think it is a paper mill."

While supplying few nutrients, sweets may cause some individuals to become susceptible to dental caries, amebic colitis, or even act as host for pinworms or other intestinal parasites. In comparison, the parasites that may be ingested with raw fruits or vegetables are destroyed in the stomach by the normal hydrochloric acid content. However, carbohydrates in excess tend to neutralize the stomach acids.

Roughage Necessary

Raw fruits, raw vegetables, and bran generally furnish the natural roughage or bulk necessary to ensure proper elimination of alimentary waste. Bran is the natural covering of grain seeds and thus is a normal constituent of wheat, rye, barley, rice, oats, and other cereal grains. Because of the adverse effects of bran loss in polishing rice and the milling of flour from wheat, we will confine our remarks to these two, but particularly to wheat.

The old cliche that "bran is removed from white flour because it is indigestible" is probably one of the most noteworthy reasons for our national affliction with constipation. We have been advised that bran is not a human food because it contains indigestible cellulose. We are not advised that it also contains the physiological solubles that aid in the performance of peristalsis and metabolism.

Clinicians claim that, because of the loss of nutritive food factors in the processing of white flour, liver function is especially impaired and constipation fostered. They contend this loss apparently is contributing to the ever-increasing list of degenerative diseases. To them the loss of some of these factors may be the reason for some systemic backup and the accumulation of toxins. This backup (constipation) causes the organs of elimination to be overworked due to *futility of performance.*

As a combustion engine, the body needs whole fuel for proper performance. Good combustion and complete exhaust mean good motor performance too. When you plug up the exhaust pipe of a car you back up the toxic gases, cause interference with the fuel supply, and the motor dies due to *futility of performance.* This futility of endeavor primarily affects the exhaustive organs—the liver, kidneys, and bowels, although the stomach, pancreas, lungs, and heart may become involved. Here we see the reason that constipation is not just a laxative problem, as the organs involved vary from one person to another.

When we apply the old adage "a chain is only as strong as its weakest link," we must concede that each patient must be treated as an individual. This is perhaps why many doctors find that detoxication (detoxification) is the first step in restoring systemic health and aids them in determining the particular gland or glands involved. Detoxication is the process by which a substance foreign to the body is changed to a compound more readily excretable. In this respect the fact that the bran content of whole grain or flour absorbs moisture and holds it in the intestines. In so doing it makes the intestinal mass more elastic and is a real aid in establishing involuntary muscle control and the rhythmic waves of peristalsis so vitally necessary in the process of elimination.

Newly milled white flour contains some remnants of bran, lecithin, and wheat germ oil, which give it a cream-like color. The bleaching process removes the color and oil. It also removes the little vitamin E remaining so that practically all that remains nutritionally is starch, which must be digested as glucose. It would appear that in addition to the other processed carbohydrates consumed, the high percentage of non-bulk-forming sugars and starches in our daily ration must contribute to the constipation problem. In addition to mostly bran and wheat germ, other losses in a smaller proportion are nutritionally just as important. The chlorine compounds used are powerful oxidizing as well as bleaching agents (similar to laundry bleaches). In the gastrointestinal tract they could inhibit vitamin and enzyme action. Flour is bleached to age it artificially, to control the gluten so that each loaf of bread bakes evenly, to destroy the destructive oxidative process that occurs in storage, and to act as a toxic preservative to keep out the weevils. These assets for the milling and baking industries are a nutritional liability for the consumer.

In *Vitamins in Health and Disease*, Dr. Barnett Sure pointed out the asininity of food regulation when he stated: "It is amusing coincidence that certain states legally require that the middlings (middle-sized bran siftings) sold as stock feed must not be robbed of their wheat germ."

Veterinarians have always claimed that animals rate better than humans in this so-called best fed nation in the world. Dr. Sure further advised that rickets usually involves constipation, that scurvy is accompanied by constipation, that white bread causes constipation, and that lemon juice added to the baby formula relieves constipation.

In work done in the biochemical laboratory of the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, it was proved that in all such cereals as barley, buckwheat, oats, rice, rye, and wheat, a series of important substances are incorporated in the inner layer of the husk that are essential to the nutritive value of the grain. Dr. Benjamin Moore, in charge of

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Guest Blog Post Submission Form nutritional investigation at the school, advised: "Cereal or bread thus denatured will not only fail adequately to nourish the body but will tend to set up disease."

Further, Dr. Frederick G. Hopkins, English Nobel Laureate in medicine and physiology (1929), stated:

> "The substances of unknown nature may need to be present in very small amounts, but if the necessary minimum is not available the utilization of the other constituents in tissue growth and repair is infallibly deficient. In the process of converting the wheat grain to fine white flour these elements are lost or destroyed. It follows that no matter how much nourishment they might otherwise contain, our systems cannot make the best use of such nourishment, owing to the absence of those elements necessary to their assimilation."

It was his early investigations that gave impetus to more scientific vitamin research.

Comparative Losses

Of the phosphorized compounds in bran, lecithin, and wheat germ oil, bran alone contains from four to twelve times the phosphorus in white flour. Of the minerals needed for tooth and bone formation and maintenance we find that calcium, phosphorus, and magnesium are all discarded in the bran, middlings, and shorts used for animal feeds.

According to Henry A. Schroeder, MD, of Dartmouth Medical School, who is noted for his mineral research, "Processed foods contain few minerals." He especially mentions that the milling of wheat into white flour removes 40 percent of the chromium, 86 percent of the manganese, 76 percent of the iron, 89 percent of the cobalt, 48 percent of the molybdenum, 78 percent of the zinc, and 68 percent of the copper. We herewith note the effect of the loss of only one of these minerals. A deficiency of zinc may contribute to an enlargement of the prostate gland, and the oversized constipated colon aggravates the condition. Zinc also has been reported to be a specific nutrient for the sex glands, the pituitary, and the pancreas. The discarded bran and wheat germ contain nearly ten times the minerals retained in the finished white flour. Apparently white flour and white sugar, presently overprocessed to ensure long shelf-life, do promote constipation and cheat us of essential factors necessary for good health.

Other Loss Effects

The loss of phosphorus in the bran interferes with phosphatase enzyme mechanisms. These enzymes play an important role in carbohydrate metabolism, nucleotide metabolism, and in the phosphorus metabolism of tooth and bone formation. In addition to lecithin and cephalin, the phospholipids and phosphatides also contain sphingomyelin as a source of choline, sphingosine, phosphoric acid, and a fatty acid. Sphingomyelin is the phospholipid occurring in brain, kidney, liver, and egg yolk. As previously stated, processing out choline and lecithin does contribute to present-day generally poor serum cholesterol metabolism. Contrary to so-called expert opinion, egg yolk is not a contributor. In fact, egg yolk is metabolized through its self-contained supply of choline and lecithin. The phosphorus compounds tend to prevent allergy and alkalosis.

The importance of calcium and its loss in the body is generally conceded, but the loss of magnesium, calcium's ionic partner, is generally unknown. Magnesium is to the soft and muscle tissues what calcium is to the hard tissues. In fact, only about one half the body's magnesium resides in bone. However, in bone and tooth formation magnesium is the real hardener. It seems to be the adhesive binder that holds the other mineral components together. Without it, osteoporosis is induced. In the soft tissues magnesium and potassium are partners, thus their loss in the discarded bran could affect brain and nerve issue, muscle tissue (especially the heart), the liver, and kidneys. Potassium deficiency can be associated with necrotic heart disease, and magnesium assists in activating exchanges of energy within each heart cell. The dynamic action of magnesium is also involved in the activity of over one hundred known enzymes. Surely, we must consider that the clinical effects of magnesium deprivation could be disastrous.

Rice Bran

Brown rice is polished to make it white. Like wheat bran, rice polishings contain amino acids, B vitamins, ferments, phosphorus compounds, and other minerals. In the East, Braddon and other investigators proved that an exclusive diet of polished rice leads to a form of acidosis and/or peripheral neuritis. These conditions do not occur in the natives who use whole unhulled rice as a diet. In *The Vitamins in Medicine*, Bicknell and Prescott advise that constipation is definitely associated with vitamin B deficiency (rice polishings are high in B factors, especially B1) and that pellagra often begins with constipation.

Medical Observation and Theory

Apparently early doctors rightly believed constipation was a cause of many human ailments. If they found the

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patient's tongue coated, they prescribed a physic. It is believed that the word physician originated from this practice. Many examinations and observations prompted them to observe the general rule of keeping the head cool, the feet warm, and the bowels open. Occasionally the bowels were purged by the use of croton oil or castor oil, but generally mild food laxatives such as prune juice, molasses, or licorice were prescribed. With the whole grain bread most everyone ate, these seemed to suffice. It was observed that the symptoms accompanying constipation, namely headache, mental depression, sluggishness, sugar in the blood, and others peculiar to individuals, were relieved following defecation.

More recently some physicians have followed the questionable edict expressed by Zoethout and Tuttle in their *Textbook of Physiology*. This book has been used as a text in several medical schools. From it we quote: "The formerly extensively held idea which attributed the symptoms of so-called biliousness and those frequently associated with constipation to intoxication by poisonous products formed in the intestinal tract has been abandoned."

To counteract the "fallacy" that bowels should move each day, some physicians advise that it is normal for some people to have no movement for several days or possibly a week. This college textbook further advises that speedy relief "can hardly be due to ridding the systems of poisons." This often-repeated phrase has been very profitable to the drug trade through a greater sale of laxatives. Obviously, this is not the answer to constipation caused or aggravated by modern day processed foods. Some surgeons advise that this abstract principle of several days without a bowel movement, intermittently, has often led to the surgical removal of bowel obstructions (compact hardened feces), which have blocked off or at least hindered the passage of the fecal stream. Clinically, the status of the abovementioned text proposition must continue to be classed as a theory, as the period of non-evacuation by healthy students was too short to allow the formation of bacterial toxins or record other clinical facts.

It now seems necessary to present the warning given by University of Pennsylvania researchers John H. Musser, MD, and George M. Piersol, MD, when they stated:

> "No clinical symptom is more frequently encountered in the practice of medicine than constipation. The commonplace and obstinate character of the affection is perhaps responsible for the prevalence of the idea that constipation is a necessary evil rarely capable of permanent cure . . . Dietetic errors are among the most frequent general causes of constipation. These consist in food which is deficient in residue by reason of which the bowel is deprived of the mechanical and chemical stimuli necessary to promote proper intestinal activity."

They cited denatured breakfast foods and breadstuffs. They also advised changes to "whole wheat bread, whole rye bread or pumpernickel in preference to white bread. Whole oatmeal and the coarser cereals such as cornmeal are important adjuncts." Their reference to whole grain foods in the diet is certainly appropriate at this time. In addition to the lost roughage or bulk, the minerals that nature has provided in wheat, rice, sugar cane, and other cereal grasses, and in sugar beets, have been deliberately removed and are thereby lost. The vitalizing mission they were designed to perform is not performed, so proper metabolism is faulted. Then the colon, composed of cells just as any other part of the body, cannot properly digest the incompletely digested food received from the small intestine. Lacking self-nutrition, the colon becomes incapable of actively performing digestive tract functions and muscular response. It has lost elasticity and peristaltic action and has practically become the sewer pipe generally presumed. Should the sewer pipe in your home become blocked, it is doubtful that you would wait several days or a week to reestablish flowage. Surely you would vow not to dump grease, coffee grounds, etc., into the sink to prevent future blockage. So it is with the colon: we must use high-residue, low-sugar foods to prevent an inactive colon.

Constipation a Disease of Western Civilization

When introduced into native diets, white flour, white sugar, white rice, pearled barley, and hydrogenated fats, all of which have lost metabolizing factors, tend to interfere with and clog the normal native elimination procedures. Colon conditions are rare in rural Africans and Asians eating unrefined foods.

Last summer American surgeons, at a symposium in Los Angeles, were brought up to date on the effects of a bad diet promoting several common conditions, including constipation. Dr. Denis P. Burkitt, a noted English surgeon with twenty years of surgical experience in East Africa, claimed that conditions such as appendicitis, diabetes, colonic polyps, hernias, and obesity—all common conditions in this country and northern Europe—were virtually unknown in East Africa. Dr. Burkitt advised that our diet must contain some of the roughage foods of our ancestors, especially the bran of the grains we eat. He said: "The effect of the coarse grain diet is to decrease the bulk and intestinal transit time, that is, the number of hours between eating a meal and its later elimination."

By ingenious studies he learned that bowel transit averaged 35 hours for the East African native Bantu, compared with the 77 to 100 hours for the average Englishman. He also claimed: "It is the high-residue rapidly moving bulk that is held responsible for the almost total absence of appendicitis in East Africa." Dr. Burkitt further advised that it was the whole grain bread and an absence of white flour and sugar, and probably more exercise, that brought

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Guanidine a Pathogenic Toxin

One little-known result of constipation is the excess production of guanidine by the pathological bacteria in the colon. Guanidine is a product of protein metabolism, and in a very small amount it is a normal blood constituent. But when produced in excess by putrefactive bacteria from undigested protein and glucose, and under-excreted, it becomes a toxic poison that affects liver action. An impaired liver usually acts lazily and allows more toxin to form. The toxic guanidine is very irritating to the colon and causes a form of spastic colitis. Some authorities consider this type of colon to be a predisposing factor in arthritis, convulsions, eclampsia, epilepsy, hypertension, and muscular dystrophy. Often halitosis, body odor, and a nitrogenous odor of stools are indicative of this condition.

More recent investigation revealed that guanidine absorbed through the overstretched thin intestinal wall could cause the calcium deposits of osteoarthritis, arteriosclerosis, and probably other forms of calcareous infiltration. Guanidine is known as a specific calcium precipitant in body fluids. It also becomes a muscular fatigue poison as an end product of overworked muscle. Apparently, this is the reason the coronary arteries are often calcified, as the only indication of such pathological change in the body. As an organic alkaline, guanidine could also become an aggravation in systemic alkalosis.

The parathyrotropic hormone is the physiological regulator of the blood guanidine level. As the calcium and guanidine content of the body fluids are complementary, the parathyroid glands, in regulating the guanidine level, tend to maintain the calcium content of these body fluids at a normal level.

Histamine

Another danger of constipation is the release in the bowel of the better-known offender histamine. It can cause many specific reactions, although it is generally considered as the irritant in practically all allergic reactions. The processed carbohydrates, especially glucose, cause a predisposition to the formation of intestinal histamine. This formation of histamine may cause atonic constipation and a ballooned colon. When histamine is released into the general system by allergens, antigens, or other agents, it may cause the symptoms of colds and migraine, or nervous headaches. If released locally it may cause varied effects, such as itching, blisters, hives, wheals, asthma, hay fever, eczema, the manifestations of ivy poisoning, shingles, and various food allergies.

Many allergic patients are said to benefit greatly when they make no other change in diet than the elimination of refined sugar. Sugar eating causes changes in body biochemistry that put them in a position in which their glands are unable to satisfactorily cope with their allergic state. From the relationship of constipation, histamine, and liver action in detoxication, it is quite apparent that insufficient liver action is a probable contributor to allergic conditions.

Intestinal Bacteria

One of our early American biochemists, Conrad A. Elvehjem, said:

> "We should not ignore the original idea of Metchnikoff that certain types of bacteria in the alimentary tract may be deleterious because they destroy certain vitamins or amino acids, or because they produce toxins detrimental to health. As we learn more about intestinal flora, we should be able to control both the beneficial and the detrimental types of organisms and to compensate for changes which we cannot control."

In conjunction with Dr. Burkitt's observations, the slow-moving intestinal mass obviously favors the accumulation of vitamin-destroying ferments present in noxious bacteria. The portions of the vitamin B complex and vitamin K formed in the intestine are the first to be destroyed. A deficiency of B complex vitamins and potassium causes a slowdown of intestinal peristalsis. A deficiency of vitamin K could result in internal hemorrhages due to hypoprothrombinemia.

Our ancestors furnished the counteracting beneficial acidophilic group of organisms through the food use of sour milk, buttermilk, and yogurt. In the intestine, milk sugar (lactose) combines with certain yeasts and ferments to form lactic acid. This favors the friendly bacteria and tends to block the growth of toxin-producing organisms. Oral antibiotics should not be used for this purpose, as they destroy both good and bad and contribute to constipation or diarrhea. Drug relaxants interfere with intestinal muscular action.

Gastrointestinal Digestion

Halitosis may be caused by local mouth conditions, such as infected teeth, gums, or tonsils. More often it is a coated-tongue systemic condition due to poor digestion as a result of insufficient stomach acids. In many instances the necessary hydrochloric acid for digestion is deliberately neutralized by the use of antacid preparations or baking soda. Contrary to most antacid advertisements, the stomach acid is usually in short supply, especially after age forty. Then too, these alkalizers, in some instances, may cause ulcers to bleed and may also contribute to permanent kidney damage. Recently a specialist in internal medicine advised that the hydrochloric acid in the stomach was so valuable in digestion that the sale of all antacid preparations should be legally prohibited.

To overcome the effects of constipation we must have an ample fluid intake, HCI, other digestive secretions, the production of bile by an active liver, enzymes, stomach motility, peristaltic action of the intestines, bulk or roughage to absorb moisture and to stimulate this action, and sufficient nonpathogenic bacteria to balance the deleterious bacteria and keep the feces loose and passable. All of these are necessary to encourage one or more movements daily, depending on the amount of food ingested and the activity of the individual.

With some of these specific physiological actions missing due to insufficient nutrients and less bulk, the constipation syndrome is steadily increasing. Dr. Jean Mayer of Harvard may have found the reason when he stated: "In 1941 only 10 percent of our food was processed. Today 50 percent is processed, engineered, or synthesized."

Constipation is a warning signal that we cannot afford to ignore or subvert if we want to have good health. According to Dr. John W. Berg, epidemiologist of the National Cancer Institute, 76,000 Americans are stricken with bowel cancer annually

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